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ABSTRACT

Much of the current crisis in education has its roots in an inability of colleges to get beyond a "now-oriented" approach to problems within the educational system. It is time for the educational focus to be directed toward anticipating alternative futures since the application of selected perspectives and procedures drawn from the field of futurism offers a powerful means of renewal for the educational enterprise. The future-oriented college begins in an initial (futuring) stage and may work through intermediate (futured) and advanced (well-futured) periods of institutional renewal. The "well-futured" college is an institution that has attained full commitment and maturity in making effective application of futuristic procedures as a means of institutional renewal through development of the curricular and resource program; lifelong human resource development for students and staff; and the use of the college's organizational development system including institutional research, planning, and market functions. The community colleges offer the most promising potential for advanced futures practices if they can seize the initiatives available and be prepared to transform themselves into Creative Community Futures centers operating as lifelong learning centers in a 21st Century environment. (HB)

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The "Well-Futured" College: Reaching for Tomorrow -- Today

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Southern Association of Community and Junior Colleges
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George B. Vaughan, Editor

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Educational organizations throughout the country are struggling to overcome the effects of a "now-oriented" atmosphere that has held most schools and colleges spellbound for over two decades. However, the exaggerated present-centered limits on education may be melting away under the heat of penetrating critiques that score this shortsightedness as a national disability. The prevailing impact may be the arousal of a national expectancy of educational re-direction.

It is timely that any emerging educational focus be directed toward anticipating alternative futures. This needed futures-orientation will allow for a polyfocal perspective on education that is lacking under the constricted "past-present" only approach that has been dominant for a quarter century. The advocacy of a polyfocal perspective in educational thinking and operations is beginning to evolve as a basis for guiding institutional education into the 21st century and beyond.

One vital factor in re-shaping educational direction is a growing recognition that the clientele of the schools and colleges will be a 21st century population. The remaining influence of the 20th century is short-lived, at best. Student interests are not well-served by an educational system that is stuck in a "futures-blind" program dictated by "bottom line" fiscal expediency leading to the obsolescence and decline of the United States as a world leader.

One of the most obvious manifestations of the need for a futures focus may be observed among the nation's colleges. It is revealed by a mounting frequency of college workshops, conference themes, and literature devoted to a widening range of "crises" in higher education. Escalating crisis management is symptomatic of a "future shock" environment challenging decision-makers at every level. These conditions pointedly call for a fundamental redirection of the perspectives guiding college operational thinking in the transitional era moving towards the 21st century.

The leading assumption of this essay is that the application of selected perspectives and procedures drawn from the field of futurism offers a powerful means of renewal for the educational enterprise. Sporadic and occasional futuristic ventures have been advocated and described in education since before the 1960s. An increased level of futuristic applications on some campuses evolved during the decade of the 1970s. But, it remains for the present period to construct a more challenging environment for managing educational futures motivated by heightened concerns over the adequacy of educational preparedness as a national strength. The nations' community colleges appear especially well positioned to assume this aspect of leadership in American education before the turn of the century.

But what is a futures-oriented college? The futures-oriented college begins with an *initial* (futuring) stage and may work through *intermediate* (futured) and *advanced* (well-futured) periods of institutional renewal. The attainment of these developmental levels is deliberate and purposeful rather than random and aimless. A "well-futured" college is defined as an institution of higher education that has attained full commitment and maturity in making effective application of futuristic procedures as a means of institutional renewal. Futurism is one means of directing the college's operational development and strengthening its capacity for realizing its mission.

Conceptualizing a "well-futured" college entails nothing less than approximating a model which prevades the mainstream of organizational dynamics: (1) the curricular and instructional program; (2) lifelong human resource development for students and staff; (3) and the college's organizational development system, including institutional research, planning, and marketing functions. These components, *taken together*, constitute a potential structure through which futures techniques may be selectively applied. Future methods are selected when appropriate to the context of each college engaged in creating its long-term future.

It is in developing the pervasive atmosphere of a "well-futured" college that the challenge of national education leadership and preparedness for the 21st century may be realized. Achievement is varied and difficult to estimate. Some educational futurists have speculated that futures studies courses, including conventional courses that have added interdisciplinary course units involving futures themes, may already number several thousand at the undergraduate level. Additionally, at least a half-dozen or so colleges include futures studies majors at the graduate level. These are now well distributed geographically. Centers include the Universities of Houston, Hawaii, Minnesota and Massachusetts at Amherst.

Futuristic coursework and training workshops designed for educators are creating a new role in education: the *educational futurist*. Emergence of the educational futurist in the waning years of the 20th century promises to overcome a historical limitation in the background and focus of contributors to the educational futures field. This is illustrated in *Figure 1*.

Early Period	Contemporary Period	Emergent Period
Futurists on Education 1950s	Educators Educational Futurism 1970s	The Futurist 1980s-90s

The simplified time line illustrated in *Figure 1* suggests that a progression is being developed which improves upon the background of those who are beginning to specialize in the theoretical and practical direction of educational futures. The ideal "educational futurist" combines the best background features of both prececessor types. Educational futurist networks, such as the

Future Trends Commission of the AACJC's National Council for Staff, Program, & Organizational Development (NCSPOD), are now in a position to provide technical assistance to colleges making an effort to become futures-oriented. Technical assistance from the futurist community to colleges at the initial, intermediate, or advanced stages is now readily available.

College futurists have been frequently mentioned in the literature and by technical resource groups since the beginning of the 1980s than previously. Constructing an inventory of available resources, including *internal resources already available within the institution,* is essential for the ongoing support systems of the three main college components: (1) staff development programs, (2) academic and student development programs, and (3) the institution's organizational development system. It is likely that some degree of campus activity with a futures orientation is already underway in each sector at most colleges. Coursework with futuristic themes, life career development services, consciousness raising "megatrends" seminars for staff and the general public, and institutional uses of futures research techniques, strategic planning and marketing approaches are increasingly seen in the college setting of today. Hence, many colleges are already functioning at the *initial* "futuring" level.

However, the early "futuring" initiatives are seldom perceived as an institutional effort yielding long-term results of high priority. Typically, early "futuring" innovations are most often regarded as trendy minor enhancements to the conventional college operation. The more comprehensive potential of institutional futures development is yet to be realized on most campuses. A more coordinative approach is now needed if colleges expect to move beyond the crisis management setting and hit-or-miss "futuring" activities. Moving beyond the initial institutional stage will require a deeper level of commitment than is prevalent today.

A persistent article of popular wisdom in America is a public expectation that the schools and colleges prepare their graduates for "the future." Cailing upon images of "the future" is a favorite rhetorical device of the academic ritual. Moreover, educational systems fear the public image of their becoming backward, socially irrelevant, academically mediocre, or worse yet, obsolete. Nevertheless, most educational organizations appear unable to maintain a balance between their past-present-future perspectives. One recent study, described later in this paper, has convincingly reported on the significance of differential time perspectives held by college leaders and the direction taken by the college.

Theoretically, it is the attainment of balanced and reciprocal time perspectives within a polyfocal "past-present-future" conspectus that is the underpinning of the "well-futured" college. Within the context of each institution's circumstances, role players influencing the operation of the organization seek to provide practical applications that will create the futures balance ordinarily missing in colleges exhibiting exaggerated "past-present" time orientations that are conventionally off balance.

Community colleges, in particular, offer the most promising potential for advanced futures practices prior to the turn of the century if they can seize the initiatives available. Their special histories and relative value systems provide the nation with a ready-made network capable of helping their students meet the demands of 21st century. For most community colleges, a futuristic focus is timely as a renewal strategy for both the college and its constituent communities.

The special potential of American community colleges for serving their constituencies as centers for creative futures preparedness now needs to be carefully considered for an unprecedented new mission. But, the futures prospect should receive wide review and consensus both within the college and among its significant constituencies before institutional commitments are made. Assuming that many colleges are already operating at the *initial* "futuring" stage, however inadvertently, it is probable that consensual commitments among internal and external constituent groups are available as a pre-disposition. This may lead to the coordinated direction necessary to enter the more committed *intermediate* "futured" stage. This is a next step on the way to "well-futured" colleges that may be seen as flagship institutions by the turn of the century.

Advocacy for community colleges to extend their mission to become Centers for Community Futures has only recently made an articulate appearance in the literature on educational futurism. It is a central purpose of this essay to contribute to an advancement of this advocacy as a creative means of enhancing college and communtiy renewal relationships.

America's community colleges, like most organizations, are experiencing unprecedented needs to overcome the impact of "future shock" at all levels. A popular transitional literature including "Third Wave" and "Megatrends" concepts reflects the pervasive recognition of these needs within the larger society. A companion literature on college futures has emerged during recent years.

Before reviewing selectively the recent literature on educational futuring in the college setting it is useful to consult briefly some foundational underpinnings of American futurism expressed in Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock* (1970):

> Every society faces not merely a succession of *probable* futures, but an array of *possible* futures, and a conflict over *preferable* futures. The management of change is the effort to convert certain possibles into probables, in pursuit of agreed-on preferables. Determining the probable calls for a science of futurism. Delineating the possible calls for an art of futurism. Defining the preferable calls for a politics of futurism.
>
> Corporations must not remain the only agencies with access to such services. Local government, schools, voluntary associations and others also need to examine their potential futures imaginatively. One way to help them do so would be to establish in each community "imaginatic centers" devoted to technically assisted brainstorming. These would be places where people noted for creative imagination, rather than technical expertise, are brought together to examine present crises, to anticipate future crises, and to speculate freely, even playfully about possible futures (p. 460).
>
> . . . . . In any such effort, the overwhelming majority of ideas put forward will, of course, be absurd, funny, or technically impossible. Yet the essence of creativity is a willingness to play the fool, to toy with the absurd, only later submitting the stream of ideas to harsh critical judgment. The application of the imagination to the future thus requires an environment in which it is safe to err, in which novel juxtapositions of ideas can be freely expressed before being critcially sifted. We need sanctuaries for social imagination (pp. 463-464).

The bibliographic portion of this essay identifies selected references that have become available within the past half-decade or so and briefly examines their usefulness for community college renewal. It is stipulated here, however, that no exhaustive review of the literature on futuring in a college setting is claimed as a prerequisite to examining selected resources.

As has been stated previously, one assumption of the present essay is that community colleges are particularly well positioned by mission and character to assist their constituent populations to anticipate effectively future trends. The "well-futured" college is conceptualized as having a fully designed and implemented program of futures-oriented educational services enabling that college's staff, students, and the general public to anticipate effectively future trends and choose alternative futures. College futures programming is necessarily dynamic, developmental and holistic in perspective and scope. It is likely that most colleges could attain well-futured levels of implementation by the turn of the century, or sooner.

Fundamentally, a morphological analysis as shown in *Figure 2* serves to illustrate a dynamic relationship between the mainstream components and developmental stages leading to a "well-futured" college:

Figure 2. Developmental Flow of the Well-Futured College

College Component	Developmental Stages: Initial "Futuring"	Intermediate "Futured"	Advanced "Well-Futured"
Staff Development	• Megatrends Seminars • Futurist Speakers & Technologies Demonstration • College Futures Roundtables	• Futuristics Skill Building & Technologies • Community Future Trends Roundtable • College Futures Council	• Experimental Futuristic Technologies • College Staff Futures Center • Educational Futures Networking Center
Program (Curricular & Student Development)	• Futuristic Units within regular courses • Conventional Counseling with Futures perspectives • Applied New Technologies Installation (Phase I)	• Future Studies Courses installed • Life Career Planning System • Applied New Technologies Center (Phase II)	• Future Studies Program in Curriculum • Human Resource Development Center • Applied & Experimental Technologies Center (Phase III)
Organizational Development	• Install Environmental Scanning • Trends Extrapolation & Basic Futures Methods • Futuristics Demonstrations (Short-Term)	• Community Futures Study Report • Strategic Planning in *Master Plan* • Forecasting & Scenarios (Long-Term)	• Community Futures Center • Appoint Professional Futurists & Research Staff • Planned College Futures System (Continuing Cycle)

Components noted in *Figure 2* are illustrative of how a college may evolve as a "well-futured" institution. The components are not considered fixed. They are used simply to convey the impression of some dynamic flow or movement toward more pervasive futures techniques and institutional commitment to selective adaptations of futuristic practices in the college setting. Many colleges are believed to be currently functioning at the initial, or "futuring" stage. Few, if any, institutions are presently believed to have evolved to the "well-futured" status. Probably less than ten percent of the nations' community colleges have plans on the drawing board, although the level of awareness and institutional symptoms of the need for well-futured colleges are accelerating. Most colleges are in the initial stage without a clear plan to evolve much further. The various techniques and methodologies of futurism such as environmental scanning, trends extrapolation, forecasting, cross-impact analysis, and scenario development are well described in the literature, however.

One simple model for identifying a literature on the well-futured college is available by adopting the Staff, Program and Organizational Development (SPOD) acronym. Combining these three foci into an integrated whole represents an appropriate initial standard for fundamental classification. Until very recently the most prominent books describing and prescribing college-based futuring practices have *not* been devoted to the complete "SPOD" spectrum. The greater number of books have centered on the "Organizational Development" field with detailed prescriptions describing strategic planning and futures research methodologies adapted to the college context. The New Directions For Institutional Research series includes Norman P. Uhl's *Using Research For Strategic Planning* (March 1983). These readings were followed by Morrison, Renfro and Boucher's *Applying Methods & Techniques of Futures Research* (September 1983). The two, taken together, are representative of current theory and practical attempts to bring futures research procedures into play as a major means of enhancing institutional planning systems for colleges. They are *essential references* for both beginning and experienced practitioners of college futuring.

College program development, including curriculum and student development components, is under-represented in books on educational futuring. Student development services is supported by Frederick R. Brodzinski (Ed.) *Utilizing Futures Research* (1979), a volume in the New Directions For Student Services series. This excellent volume also includes a bonus chapter on futuring as a tool for staff development.

The broad field of curriculum futures development is sparse on college program development and teaching references for undergraduate future studies. Many of the better books were produced during the late 1970s. The classic curriculum references are Harold G. Shane's *The Educational Significance of the Future* (1973) and *Educating For A New Millenium* (1981). These paperbacks are published by the Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation at Bloomington, Indiana. Both devote limited attention to post-secondary education, however. The community college world is still without a book-length reference aimed exclusively at educational futuring, futures-oriented curriculum development, and future studies instruction in the two-year college.

Despite these limitations, there are several references from the educational futurist literature that serve to fill the void. These include Draper L. Kaufman's mid-70s classic on *Teaching The Future* (1976: ETC Publications, Palm Springs, California); a publication of the World Future Society: *Education and the Future* (1980), edited by Lane Jennings and Sally Cornish; and, Kaufman's more recent *Futurism and Future Studies* (1980) published by the National Education Association. A National Council For The Social Studies publication: *Futures Unlimited: Teaching About Worlds To Come* (1979), edited by Robert M. Fitch and Cordell M. Svengalis of the University of Iowa, complements a selected collection for assisting college instructional programs to become futures-oriented. These four books are a quality collection of staff development aids that can provide foundations for the well-futured college's instructional plans and practices, including course units and techniques for instructors.

During 1984 the appearance of a collection of readings produced for community college practitioners significantly overcame much of the futures reference lag confronting the two-year colleges. A project of NCSPOD's Future Trends Commission led to the excellent paperback edited by Richard J. Brass entitled *Community Colleges, The Future, and SPOD* is now available from New Forums Press, Inc. of Stillwater, Oklahoma. The range of topics and authors (15 in all) make this volume an indispensable contribution to the literature. The work should serve as a basis for staff development and institutional renewal in the community college.

Neal A. Norris' vision of "The Community College as a Future-Oriented Community Learning System" (Brass (Ed.), *Ibid.*) is a provocative starting place for community college futuring perspectives.

The foregoing review has been limited to selected books believed to provide support for developing a well-futured college. Generally, the journal articles and "fugitive" literature suffer from the limitations of institutional parochialism and the exaggerations of the "brag article" set. In spite of this acknowledged bias, three recent articles are of significance: Ringle and Savikas' "Administrative Leadership: Planning and Time Perspective," in the *Journal of Higher Education* (1983) offers a rare summary of empirical studies on the influence of the college leader's time devoted to institutional futures. A recent issue of *The Futurist* (August, 1984) includes an excellent article on career projection systems in David Borchard's "New Choices: Career Planning in a Changing World;" a typology for lifestyle futures is described in Arnold Mitchell's article "Nine American Lifestyles: Values and Societal Changes;" and, a special section consisting of five articles on creativity.

Finally, an additional bibliography published in the ASCD's special issue, "Preparing for the Future," in *Educational Leadership* (September, 1983) in Don Glines' "Resources on the Future." This article provides a generous sampling of available resources for futures-minded educational leaders. The World Future Society and its publications add measurably to the stock of resources and services available. Their bi-monthly journal, *The Futurist*, is an indispensable guide to the professional futures community and its concerns.

One speculation is in order regarding the optimistic prospect that community colleges could become creative Community Futures Centers for the 21st century. It is likely that many of the two-year community colleges reaching "well-futured" maturity will *need to become full-service baccalaureate institutions by the turn of the century!* Further, the requirements of local economic development programs depending upon access to advanced college programs and services can be expected to stimulate the emergence of the 21st century community college as a lifelong learning institution *which goes well beyond the two-year limitations of its 20th century origins.*

Plausible combinations of conventional and innovative college programming and delivery systems spawned during the twilight years of our present century suggest a rich variety of community college futures scenarios awaiting developmental leadership. Well-futured communities colleges will tend to fulfill their expectations as they become bold in conception and in deed.

This essay has provided a conceptualization of the institutional potential of American undergraduate colleges, especially community colleges, as a means of providing creative preparedness for anticipating and choosing among alternative personal and societal futures into the 21st century. A balanced time perspective which includes the future is believed to offer a more useful model for college direction and renewal than the present and past. A futuristic perspective, when consensual, could commit the colleges to a new emphasis upon applied futuring processes that pervade and enliven the institution and its community constituencies. A continuum indicating that many colleges are already operating, however inadvertently, with a futures-oriented spectrum would place most institutions somewhere within the initial "futuring" stage. Institutional progress toward the potential *intermediate* "futured" and *advanced* "well-futured" stages is advocated as a promising approach to institutional renewal while expanding the college service mission beyond the timid limitations fo 20th century past-present expediency.

Finally, it is speculated that the "well-futured" community colleges of the late 20th century will enter the 21st century renewed and therefore capable of operating as creative Community Futures Centers forming a national educational resource network that is sorely needed as American education reaches for tomorrow — today.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

The following selected references are suggested in addition to those included in the essay. They are available through the publishers or may be ordered from the World Future Society, 4916 St. Elmo Avenue, Bethesda, MD.

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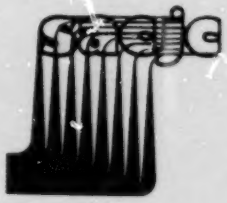

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